

JOURNAL

OF

THE ASIATIC SOCIETY.

No. 38.—*February*, 1835.

I. — *Some Account of a Sect of Hindu Schismatics in Western India, calling themselves Rámsanèhí, or Friends of God. By Capt. G. E. WESTMACOTT, Asst. to the Gov. Gen's Agent, N. E. Frontier.*

OF THE MAHANT OR RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS OF THE ORDER.

RÁMCHARAN, the founder of the Rámsanèhís, was a Rámávat Byrá-gí, born A. D. 1719*, at Sorahchasen, a village in the principality of Jypur. The precise period, nor the causes, which led him to abjure the religion of his fathers, do not appear : but he steadily denounced idol-worship, and suffered on this account great persecution from the Brahmans. On quitting the place of his nativity in 1750, he wandered over the country, and eventually repaired to Bhílwára, in the Udípur territory, where after a residence of two years, Bhím Singh, prince of that state, and father of the present Rána, was urged by the priests to harass him to a degree which compelled him to abandon the town.

The then chief of Sháhpora, who also bore the name of Bhím Singh, compassionating his misfortunes, offered the wanderer an asylum at his court, and prepared a suitable escort to attend him : the sage, while he availed himself of the courtesy, humbly excused himself from accepting the elephants and equipage sent for his conveyance, and arrived at Sháhpora on foot, in the year 1767 ; but he does not seem to have settled there permanently until two years later, from which time, it may be proper to date the institution of the sect. Rám-charan expired in the month of April, 1798, in the seventy-ninth year of his age, and his corpse was reduced to ashes in the great temple at Sháhpora.

* A. Samvat 1776.

Sadha Rám, Governor of Bhílwára, a Bania of the Deopura tribe, was one of Rámcharan's bitterest enemies : he on one occasion dispatched a Singí* to Sháh-pura to put the schismatic to death ; but the latter, who probably got information of his purpose, bent his head low as the man entered, and told him to perform the service on which he was deputed, but to remember that as the Almighty alone bestowed life, man could not destroy it, without the Divine permission. The hired assassin trembled at what he took for preternatural foresight in his intended victim, fell at his feet, and asked forgiveness.

Rámcharan composed 36,250 Sabd or hymns, each containing from five to eleven verses : thirty-two letters go to each aslok, which give the above total. He was succeeded in the spiritual directorship by Rám-jan, one of his twelve Chèla or disciples. This person was born at the village of Sirsin, embraced the new doctrine in 1768, and died at Sháh-pura in 1809, after a reign of 12 years, 2 months and 6 days. He composed 18,000 Sabd.

The third hierarch, Dulha Rám, became a Rámsanèhí, A. D. 1776, and died in 1824 : he wrote ten thousand Sabd, and about four thousand sakí, or epic poems, in praise of men eminent for virtue not only of his own faith, but among Hindus, Muhammedans, and others.

Chatra Dás was converted at the early age of twelve years, ascended the throne† in 1824, and died in 1831. He is said to have written 1000 Sabd, but would not permit their being committed to paper.

Naráyan Dás, the fourth in descent from Rámcharan, now fills the chair of spiritual director.

On the demise of a Mahant, an assembly of the priests and laity is convened at Sháh-pura to elect a successor, who is chosen with reference alone to his wisdom and virtues. He is installed on the thirteenth day after the office falls vacant, on which occasion the By-rágís entertain the entire Hindú population of the town with a banquet of sweetmeats at the temple within the city-walls, known by the name of Rammerí‡.

The only difference between the garb of the Mahant and that of the priests consists in the quality of the cloth, which is made of cotton of

* Singí. A particular cast of Hindus, so called in Rájwára from their conducting a number of their own, and of the Mahesrí and Suruogí tribes of Banias, to noted places of pilgrimage, free of all expence. The word is evidently a corruption from Sangí a companion.

† Gaddí is the term invariably applied to the cushion of the superior and Maháráj (mighty prince), the only title by which he is addressed and spoken of by the Rámsanèhís. They approach him with profound obeisance, reverently touch his foot, and lay their foreheads to the marble on which he is seated.

‡ Merí signifies an upper-roomed house in the language of Rájwára.

rather a finer texture than theirs : their diet is the same, and consists of dry cakes of coarse wheat flour without any kind of seasoning. The superior resides at Sháh-pura, the chief place of their religion, but occasionally leaves it for a period of one or two months, wandering over the country to mortify his body and accustom it to endure fatigue.

Religion.

The Rámsanèhís believe in the unity and omnipotence of God, whom they regard as the Author of creation, preservation, and destruction ; nor so far as I could learn, do they hold his nature and attributes to differ materially from the doctrine professed by ourselves. They call the Supreme Being, Rám ; he is the source of all good, and the averter of evil, and as none can fathom his decrees, resignation to them is implicitly enjoined. Man is pronounced incapable of any exertion of himself : whatever comes to pass is accomplished through the Divine Agency ; and as God alone is the bestower of rewards and punishments, the Rámsanèhís are instructed to be constant in his worship, in the morning, at noon and night, and always to ask his blessing before going to meals. The soul is believed to be an emanation from the Divine spirit, which takes flight to heaven on the dissolution of the human frame ; and they inculcate, if a person commit sin, who has enjoyed the advantages of education and is versed in the scriptures, no future act however exemplary can procure his remission from punishment, but in the case of an illiterate man, that he may by study, devotion and repentance obtain absolution of his crimes.

The formation and worship of idols is expressly prohibited. The Rámsanèhís pass the Hindu gods unnoticed, and no sort of images or symbols of idolatry are admitted into their temples. When I pointedly asked Náráyan Dás his opinion of idol-worship, he replied in verse :—‘ As to lave the body in the ocean is equivalent to bathing in all the rivers of earth, since they flow into the great deep ; and to irrigate the roots of a tree is sufficient without further waste to nourish and bring forth its leaves, its flowers, and its fruits ; so to worship the omnipotent God, does away the necessity of addressing all inferior deities.’

The Mahant said it was a mistake to suppose the doctrine of the sect was new—it had in fact existed in the world from a very remote period, though shorn of its purity by admixture with debasing superstitions and false tenets, engrafted upon it from time to time by the ignorant and designing. Men were born in every age who held sound principles of belief, but persecution compelled them to recant their opinions, or to take refuge in the wilds. It was reserved for

Rámcharan to frame a code from the most approved writings of Hindu law-givers : to avoid giving a shock to the prejudices of the people he desired to convert, he wisely took the Shástras for his guide, culling that which was good, and rejecting all that he deemed mischievous—and he called those who adopted his opinions Rámsanèhí, friends or servants of God.

The Mahant readily engaged to furnish me with a complete collection of their sacred writings ; but as there was but one copy in the temple, I succeeded in bringing away with me only a few selections, of which I subjoin a translation. The head of each page is inscribed with the holy name of Rám, used by the society as an initial title of respect, corresponding with the Alif (Allah) of the Musalmans, and Srí of the Hindús, and signifying, that an author solicits the blessing of God on commencing a work, and invokes success on the undertaking.

The Mahant wrote the first Sabd in an elegant hand, the rest were transcribed by the priests in a corresponding style of beauty, and red ink-marks are introduced in the commencement and end of each couplet. The religious works of the Rámsanèhís are written in the Deva Nágarí character, and chiefly in the Hindí language, with an admixture of Rájwára provincialisms—but there are also a great many Sanskrit and some Panjabí verses, and Arabic and Persian words likewise find a place.

Of the Priests.

Priests are called either Byrágí or Sádhi, and are divided into three classes, the two last of which, denominated Bedehí and Mohaní, I shall notice presently. They are enjoined to study the holy writings, and to disclaim all merit in their works : to observe celibacy, chastity, humility, abstinence, and contentment : to put a restraint upon the tongue : to sleep little : to accustom the body to hardships and fatigue : and to exercise charity, liberality, and mercy. Anger, brawls, avarice, selfishness, usury, gaming, lying, theft, lust, hypocrisy, and all kinds of luxuries are strongly denounced.

Priests are commanded never to look at their face in a glass, nor to use snuff, perfumes, or ornaments, as such things savour of vanity. To go bare-footed, and on no account to ride on any kind of conveyance : never to destroy any thing animate, nor to live in solitude, nor to ask or receive money. Dancing, music, and other frivolous amusements are forbidden, and to taste of tobacco, opium, and all intoxicating drugs and spirits.

They are not permitted to prepare medicines, but do not object to receive them in time of sickness at the hand of a stranger.

It may be right to mention in this place, that many of the reasons given for the institution of particular rites were received from the chief of the Rámsanèhís, to whom I made three visits : he usually delivered himself in Sanskrit verse, which he afterwards explained in the local dialect, for the instruction of his hearers.

It was a maxim of Rámcharan that woman and gold in the present vicious state of society were the principal sources of mischief in the world, he therefore enacted a strict ordinance for priests to shun both of them. The founder, a married man without a family, set the example of putting away his wife ; and this sacrifice, with the desertion of one's children, are essential to obtain admission to the order : but the families of these Byrágís are, I believe, in all cases comfortably provided for. So strictly is the rule of continence enforced, that a priest is only permitted to converse with females on matters connected with religion ; the smallest approach to levity would involve the dismissal of the culprit. Dulha Rám, the third Hierarch, was affianced at the time he became a Rámsanèhí, and of course broke troth and cast away the kangna or thread bound round a bridegroom's wrist ; hence his name Dulha or the Bridegroom. A Turan*, representing a bunch of flowers in stone, is suspended under the porchway of his shrine at Sháhpara, in commemoration of the circumstance.

Gold is supposed to beget avarice, and to accept of it destroys the integrity of all previous acts of piety and virtue. I combatted its interdiction on the plea that the misuse, as of every thing else, was to be guarded against, but that it was capable of working much good—and inquired if women were thought so ill of, why the sect admitted female converts. “The touch of gold,” said Náráyan Dás, “is a lure to sin, and marriage is prohibited to ecclesiastics (not to the laity), because the cares of a family would interfere materially with their holy meditations. The heart should be fixed on one alone (God), he who places his affections on any thing mortal, ceases to be a Byrágí.” It is related, in example of the little value set on lucre by the Rám-sanèhís, that a man presented Dulha Rám on some occasion with a philosopher's stone, which the sage received in silence and cast into a well. The author of the gift, indignant at the contempt shown to his offering, preferred a complaint to the Rája of Sháhpara, who asked the superior the motive of his conduct. The man having acknowledged he bestowed away the stone, the Mahant inquired how he could

* It is usual among Rájpúts of all ranks, at the time of a wedding, for the father of the bride to suspend a bunch of flowers made of silk or wood, called turan, at his porchway, which the bridegroom strikes with the handle of a whip or stick before he enters to bear away the bride.

in reason complain of the loss of what did not belong to him.—“Your motive,” said Dulha Rám, “in presenting the stone was to tempt me to evil ; but I covet not gold, nor is the transmutation of metals fitting employment for a mendicant : take ye twenty rupees and begone.”

A Byrágí, convicted of receiving money, is branded on the forehead with a metal coin, heated for the purpose, and ejected from the community. Yet this interdiction, however strict, must be regarded as nominal, since lay followers receive money for the use of the order—and two Banias of the sect residing in Sháhpura are appointed expressly to receive remittances, lend out money, and carry on trade on account of the holy fraternity.

A woman may become a priestess, as in the instance of Sarúp, a devoted adherent of Rámcharan, by abandoning her husband and offspring, and by conforming strictly to chastity and other statutes. Females are forbidden under pain of chastisement and excommunication, to approach places of worship after dusk, as they form the residence of the priesthood : it is considered prudent to guard them from temptation, although they are supposed to have acquired absolute controul over the passions and all unlawful desires, before they are admitted to the sect. The sexes sit apart in the temples, and never sing together.

In regard of the injunction to sleep little, and to follow habits of industry, they say there is enough of sleep in the grave, life is evanescent, and of too much value to be passed in repose ; and by wasting the precious hours in slumber, man degrades himself to an equality with the brute. Their aliment is poor, and taken sparingly, because abstinence induces watchfulness, while a surfeit of food and sleep make the soul heavy. Priests reside away from the habitations of man, as the turmoil of cities would interrupt their meditations ; but they are at the same time commanded to live together, to correct the foibles and relieve the gloom of each other. “A solitary lamp,” added the chief, “however brilliant, casteth a shadow beneath it—place another lamp in the apartment, and the darkness of both is dissipated.”

The priest changes his name on admission to the order, to denote he enters on a new state of life, and the hair of his face and head (with exception to a small tuft on the crown) is shaved close ; there are several barbers on the establishment, whose business it is to perform this office ; they are wealthy, and receive occasionally valuable presents. I heard of a Charan, who, in a fit of liberality, presented five hundred rupees to one of them. The only covering worn by the Sádhi is a cotton cloth, of coarse texture, seven feet and a half long, with a small piece for a waistband, and another for a percolater, water being always strained before it is used for culinary or other purposes, to guard

against the destruction of animalculæ. The sheet is coloured with Gíru, a kind of red-ochre, emblematical of humility ; they add a second in the winter season, and sometimes a third, when if warmth be not obtained, they throw off all clothing, to mortify feeling, disdaining, as they express it, to be overcome by the wintry elements. This sheet is brought over the head, and forms its only covering ; but woollen cloth of similar dimensions is sometimes substituted for cotton in the cold months. They all go bare-footed, and never ride on any description of animal or wheeled conveyance.

A perpendicular mark of white clay, called Sirí, imprinted on the forehead, is a distinguishing symbol of the sect, denoting belief in the unity of God, and they have a rosary of small beads used in prayer about their necks. Metal utensils are proscribed. The Sádhs drink from wooden goblets, and eat off stone, china, and earthen-ware ; the latter, it is well known, are forbidden to orthodox Hindus. They abstain from animal food, and what is singular, considering the extraordinary anxiety shewn to provide for the safety of insects, partake of nothing unsubdued by fire, fruits and vegetables not excepted. They have no objection to touch the element, but refrain from preparing their own food : thus it should seem, however fearful themselves, to incur the deadly sin of robbing a creature of life, they do not view the act in others with the same antipathy. Even the most loathsome vermin are held sacred ; whenever a Rámsanèhí kindles a light, he covers it with a shade, and lamps are excluded from the temples from an apprehension they may lure insects to destruction. Influenced by a similar feeling, the priests look on the ground before they walk, and never move out of doors, except on very urgent business, during four months of the year, or from the middle of Asarh* to the middle of Kartik. The insect population being most active in the wet months, they fear to crush them under foot in passing through the rank vegetation, and should they be on a journey, halt without reference to situation, till the season is over.

The total number of Sádhs, so far as I could ascertain from inquiry in various quarters, does not exceed eight hundred. No census has ever been taken : they are dispersed over the country frequently at a great distance from Sháhpura, and never attend the festival of Phúl Dol together, so it is obviously impossible to arrive at a correct estimate. The number at Sháhpura constantly varies, and about a hundred are sometimes met with in the temple at one time ; the visitors who come to make their respects to the superior, to consult him and receive his blessing, usually remain for three days, and give place to others.

* July, August, September, and October.

The priests may be considered wealthy, their few wants considered, and the laity subscribe liberally to their support. Two of them visit the town of Sháh-pura daily, to collect ready-dressed victuals from lay members of the community and Hindus of the better class, who contribute readily to fill their wallets. They do not accept food from other sects, and the custom is observed, it should seem, as an act of humility, certainly not from an avaricious motive. The fraternity make their evening repast off these offerings, and purchase materials for a simple breakfast, the only other meal, out of their own coffers.

Rámcharan had twelve pupils or disciples, called Chèla, whom he selected from the priesthood, filling up vacancies as they occurred, from the most virtuous of the elders, and this custom is continued by his successors. They are called the “Baruh Thumbe ke Sadh,” or disciples of the twelve pillars. The middle hall of the temple where the Mahant sits, and prayers are read, being supported by that number of columns, three on a side, beneath which the disciples range themselves. The openings between the columns are hung with cotton cloths, dyed with Gíru, let down at night to exclude the air, and here the priests take their repose; the pavement of the hall is elevated above the outer terrace, and is the only part of the structure laid with mats, and dry grass is spread upon the terrace in the winter, the only time of year such a luxury is permitted, to serve as a cushion to the laity and visitors who are not admitted inside.

The twelve do not reside permanently at Sháh-pura, but four or five are always found there at one time. One of them denominated Kotwal acts as steward of the grain and medicines deposited in the temple, and distributes a daily allowance of food to the inmates; nothing can be taken from the store without the Mahant's order; it is also the duty of the Kotwal to summon the priests to midnight prayer.

Another of the body called Kapradár—keeper of the wardrobe—has charge of various kinds of clothes presented by the laity and strangers for the use of the brotherhood: these include coarse cottons, blankets, and other woollens, but no coloured or rich stuffs are accepted. The cloths supply the Sádhs with raiment, and when cast off, are bestowed in charity; and some of the brotherhood are constantly employed preparing dresses for the poor. The same individual keeps the vessels of the refectory.

A third fills the office of censor, and maintains strict watch over the manners and moral conduct of the fraternity. A fourth teaches the priesthood to read, and a fifth instructs them in writing.

Another is appointed to teach reading and writing to men of all persuasions who apply to him, while a seventh, usually selected for his

age and saturnine temper, instructs females in the same acquirements.

The remaining five, with three disciples chosen indifferently from among those mentioned above, form a council of eight, appointed by the Mahant, to investigate into offences and infringements of the rules of the order. The elder ecclesiastics have usually several disciples, who are byrágís, and in event of the absence of a member filling an office in the establishment at Sháh-pura, a trust-worthy follower officiates as his deputy.

Of the Priests called Bedehí and Móhaní.

Bedehí, compounded of two words *be*, without, and *deh*, body, implies that the persons so denominated are dead to all corporeal feeling, and accordingly they go stark naked.

The Mohaní, as the term indicates, feign insensibility and unconsciousness of all that passes around them. Priests who have not sufficient command over their tongues become "Mohaní," not for life, but a period of years; and when they have brought their hasty tempers into complete subjection, they resume the use of speech. They repeat "Rám, Rám," the watch-word of the sect, in acknowledgment of a salutation, and permit themselves to converse and answer questions on subjects strictly confined to their religion. With exception to the particulars noted, the Bedehí and Mohaní differ in no respect from the other priests.

The hungry, be their creed what it may, are never sent away empty from the temple, and the ragged are provided with suitable raiment. During Chyt, Bysakh, and Jeth, or from the middle of March to the middle of June, the hottest period of the year, the mahant stations a brahman*, with water-carriers at a distance of two miles from Sháh-pura, on the different roads leading to the city, to minister to the wants of the thirsty traveller. And all the cattle of the town receive a certain allowance of fodder and water during the above season from the same bountiful source.

It will be seen, that the doctrine of the Rámsanèhís inculcates the mortification of the passions, with entire abstraction from the world, and the renunciation of all its pleasures and enjoyments. The two sins held in most abhorrence are incontinence and avarice, and are never forgiven. The dress of the priesthood is kept scrupulously neat and clean, and changed, I believe, every day, or second day, and

* It is barely necessary to mention, that a brahman is chosen, because Hindus of inferior caste, and I might include foreigners, are gratified to accept the beverage from his hand, while they might hesitate to take it from a man of low tribe.

their modest quaker-like demeanour, as they respond “ Rám, Rám ” to the salutation of the traveller, prepossesses him strongly in their favour.

Of the Laity.

The laity, known by the general name of girhist, are at liberty at any time to enter the hierarchy, and the office of mahant is open to them. They are particularly enjoined to speak the truth ; to be constant in their affections, and just and honest in their dealings. I omitted to inquire, if females are forbidden to become Satí, but rather think they are not, as two of the wives of the late Rájá of Sháh-pura, who was a Rámsanèhí, burnt in 1825. It might be that the force of ancient custom was in this case too strong to be overcome, and the noble often indulge licenses which would not be countenanced in the peasant.

The girhist celebrate their weddings with none of the pomp and rejoicing usual with the brahmanical Hindus, but conduct the ceremonial in a quiet unobtrusive manner. Like the byrágís, they are forbidden to mourn for the dead, as an act answering no purpose, since death is the doom of all, and also because it implies a want of resignation to the divine will. They burn their dead, and chaunt Sabd over a corpse.

Neither priests nor laymen observe Tíja, Dashahra, Dewálí, Holí, nor any other Hindu festival, that I am aware of ; they keep a strict fast from sun-set until sun-rise, nor even when sick, are they permitted to take any nourishment, but medicine during those hours.

The laity at Sháh-pura are in number about two hundred, of which perhaps a hundred and twenty are of the male sex, and they are interdicted turning Bedehí and Mohaní, as attention to the rules of those orders are incompatible with the discharge of temporal duties.

Converts.

The Rámsanèhís are composed of all castes of Hindus, and although no members of other sects have been converted, nor so far as I could learn, have any applied for admission to the order, the tenets are characterised by so much of liberality that I see nothing to oppose it. Both Christians and Muhammadans are freely admitted to their places of worship ; all that is required of them, being to remove their shoes : but in the matter of diet, the force of prejudice and ancient custom are so strong among the sectaries, that I doubt if they would allow apostates of any other faith to eat with them.

Converts can be admitted to the society by the superior alone in the temple at Sháh-pura, and they are conducted for this purpose by the priests from different parts of India. The superior makes the novice over on his arrival to the twelve Sádhs of the pillars, who are

directed to examine him on the soundness of his belief, and to make him thoroughly conversant with the tenets on which their religion is founded. Should their report be favourable, the name of the convert is changed, supposing he enter the hierarchy, but not otherwise, and he is received into the order, after undergoing a novitiate of forty days.

Some brahmans have enrolled themselves, but converts have been made principally from the mahèsrí* and agarval tribes of baneas. There are no certain accounts of the number of Rámsanèhís dispersed over Western India; they abound chiefly in Rajwára and Gujarát, are met with in the neighbourhood of most large cities and towns, such as Bombay, Surat, Hyderabad, Punah, and Ahmedabad, and there are some at Benáres.

When we consider the strict rules by which the ecclesiastics are bound, and the hardships by which they are expected to subdue the body, it is not surprising their number should augment but slowly; but the superior assured me, they had much increased of late years through the quiet which Western India enjoys under British protection.

Worship.

Worship is performed three times a day, but the laity, busied in their worldly avocations, do not all go at one hour, though once seated, they remain in the temple till the service is over. The book of prayer is always read aloud by a layman, who makes a pause at the end of every second or third verse, to enable the mahant, and in other tabernacles, a priest of superior acumen, to expound and comment on the texts in the dialect of the country. Not more than six or seven Sabd are read in a day, and continued concordant to order, until the whole have been explained to the congregation; thus two years are frequently occupied in going through the sacred writings.

The Sádhs rise at midnight, and continue at their devotions until the first watch of the morning (8 A. M.), when the laity attend for a couple of hours, and the service concludes with a couple of Sabd or songs of praise chaunted by females. Mid-day prayer commences at one or two P. M., and lasts for several hours; and evening service, at which only men are present, begins at dusk, and terminates in an hour, during which time, two arthí or hymns, are sung. As observed in another place, men and women never sing together, and they sit apart in the temples; and when the priests are alone, they pass hours together in silent abstraction, and at other times, count their beads, repeating at intervals the holy name of Rám.

* Mahèsrí from Mahèsvar, a name of Mahádèva: both tribes worship the god under different energies.

Festival of Phúl Dol.

Annually in the month Phálgún*, a festival called Phúl-dol, is observed at Sháh-pura, attended by as many of the priests and laity as are within reasonable distance: the Sádhs rarely allow two seasons to pass in succession without attending. The five or six last days in Phálgún are, strictly speaking, the festival, but people begin to assemble upwards of a month earlier from distant parts of India.

The name of the festival, signifying "Flowers swinging" is borrowed I understand from one of the eighteen Puráns called Srímáth Bhágavat, which contains an account of Krishna, and is intended more particularly for the instruction of his followers. A festival is annually observed in Bengal, and probably in other parts of Hindustan, by the worshippers of the god on the full moon of Chyt or Býsakh, when he is encircled with wreaths of flowers, placed in a sort of cradle, and swung by his votaries. I obtained no satisfactory reason why the Rámsanèhís, who do not observe the rite alluded to, should give the name of Phúl-dol to their great annual meeting.

Two or three Sádhs reside in every village of consideration, and from eight to twelve, and upwards, in each city and large town, according to its populousness: they are always relieved at the Phúl-dol, a regulation framed by DULHA RÁM, the third mahant, to prevent their forming friendships and improper connections with the inhabitants: on no account are they permitted to remain for two successive years at one place.

Each of the princes of Udípur, Jodhpur, Jypur, Kotah, Búndí and of some of the smaller Rajput states, although orthodox Hindus, to evince their respect for the Rámsanèhís, send from eight to twelve hundred rupees to Sháh-pura on the anniversary of Phúl-dol, to furnish forth a day's entertainment of sweetmeats to the sect.

Besides the Rám-dwára or temple outside Sháh-pura, there is another religious edifice within the city wall, called Rám-merí, which has an establishment of five brahman cooks, five females to grind meal, and a similar number of water-carriers for the service of the brotherhood. Hither the high priest resorts with a few of the most pious of the Sádhs, on the last day of each month, to keep a solemn vigil during the night, in commemoration of the death of RÁMCHARAN. Prayers are offered up, and the holy writings expounded, and respectable people of all persuasions are admitted to the building. The priests distribute sweetmeats and food collected in the town to the congregation, reserving their own share till morning.

* February, March.

Punishment.

When any member of the community infringes a rule, he is brought to Sháh-pura, at the festival of Phúl-dol, by some one of the byrágís, who, as already mentioned, are dispersed over the country to watch the conduct of the sect. He is not permitted to eat with the brotherhood, nor to enter the holy edifice; but seated at a little distance off under a certain tamarind tree, where his food is sent to him on a platter of dhák* leaves. The offence with which he is charged is investigated by the council of eight, who make a report on it to the high priest. If found guilty, the culprit is deprived of his rosary, a barber of the establishment shaves the top-knot off his head, and he is ejected from the community. What is stated above applies to grievous offences. Slight infringements of order are investigated at all seasons; and sometimes when the culprit happens to be a long distance off, the priest stationed at the place takes a deposition of the case, and transmits it to the mahant, when if considered fit, he excommunicates the culprit, without ordering him to Sháh-pura. It will be seen, the superior and council are a check upon each other, and they must coincide in opinion before a sentence can be carried into effect.

Religious Edifices.

Temples of the Rámsanèhís are known under the name of Rám-dwára, or the gate of God. Among other places in Rajwára, where they are met with, may be enumerated Jypur, Jodphur, Mertha, Nagor, Udypur, Chittor, Bhíl-wára, Tonk, Búndí, and Kotah. The one at Sháh-pura is by a great deal the handsomest, and distinguished for the richness and magnificence of its architecture: it is built of rock quarried at Katí, a distance of twenty-four miles, and coated with brilliant white chunam, formed of the same stone, reduced to powder and mixed with milk and other ingredients, which adapt it to receive a high polish. The entrance porch faces the east, and is very lofty, with an arched balcony above, and like other parts of the buildings, neatly carved. From the centre of the pile, a handsome pavilion, with open arches, rises far above the other towers; and in a vault beneath, the corpse of the founder of the sect was reduced to ashes. Between the vault and pavilion, there is an equilateral apartment, supported on twelve pillars, connected by scalloped arches: this was the favourite abode of RÁMCHARAN, and here the mahant daily takes his seat, to expound the doctrines of the faith, and the congregation assemble on the terrace without, for morning and evening prayer.

On the south face of the temple, but quite separate from it, stands a range of seven domes, to which you ascend by steps, six of them re-

* *Butea frondosa.*

pose on twelve pillars, and correspond exactly in their proportions : three are built over the ashes of the Spiritual Fathers, who succeeded the founder, and the others cover a similar number of venerated priests of the community. The central or seventh dome has only five columns, and is much smaller than the rest ; it marks the spot where the remains of a female named SARU'P, a pious disciple of RÁMCHARAN, were burnt ; and the domes, with those of the temple, are painted inside and out in ornaments of vivid colours. The Rám-dwára was built at different periods, when funds were available, and is said to have cost about eighty thousand rupees : it is kept remarkably clean, and presents a unique and handsome appearance, essentially differing in design from all Hindu edifices I have seen. On a level with the vault are apartments for the priests and members of the sect, who resort to Sháhpara at the festival of Phúl-dol, and here are also the stores of linen and blankets belonging to the fraternity.

Behind the Rám-dwára repose the ashes of the ancient Rájas of Sháhpara, each in a distinct shrine. BHI'M SINGH, grandsire of the reigning chief, was the patron of RÁMCHARAN, and was the first of his family who embraced the new doctrines. The late Rájá died at Udypur in 1825, but his turban was transmitted to Sháhpara, and with it two of his wives performed Satí.

**Selected Translations from the Religious Writings of the Rámsanèhís.*

1.—The name of RA'MA is the real seed, in which all things are contained : for he is the source of the three qualities (of goodness, passion, and darkness) ; of the fourteen regions (of Hindu cosmogony) ; of the twenty-four (incarnations) ; the three hundred and thirty millions (of Hindu deities) ; and the three (principal Gods, viz. BRAHMA, VISHNU, and MAHESWARA), who should be adored, and who not ? RA'MCHARAN says, the whole universe sprung from that only seed, as leaves shoot forth and fall off in abundance from the same tree.

2.—The person who adores the all-pervading RA'MA, and turns his back upon the other gods ; who visits his guru with bare feet, and stretches forth his liberal hand ; who has renounced the world, neither uses harsh language nor jokes, and seeks not any pleasure ; who giving up all considerations on profit and loss, resigns himself to the will of HARI† ; who is not addicted to gaming, stealing, avarice, lying, and hypocrisy ; who does not taste bhang‡, tobacco, opium,

* I have to acknowledge my obligations to Bábu KA'SI PRASHA'D GHOS of Calcutta, for his courtesy in assisting me with a translation of these papers : he purposely rendered it as literal as possible, and I am not sure if it would not have been better had I left it in that form.

† A name of VISHNU, but employed here and elsewhere along with RA'MA, to express God in an abstracted sense ; the frequent mention of these two as objects of worship, is owing to the doctrine of the Rámsanèhís being mixed up with the tenets, and these verses being selections from the books, of other Hindu sects.

‡ An intoxicating potion, prepared from the hemp plant (*Cannabis Sativa*).

akhaz and wine; who drinks water after straining it, and looks before he walks, is the true Rámsanèhí who hath attained his purpose.

3.—RA'MA is the sea of happiness and destroyer of misery—abandon him not, O RA'MCHARAN, but be constant in his worship.

Song in the Pánjábí language.

The faqír who is enamoured of the beauty of the All-Merciful is drowsy throughout the eight prahars*, because he is fully intoxicated with his love. He (or his spirit) has come from an inaccessible region, and entered the corporeal frame, and after having witnessed all the troubles of the world will return to that region. As long as He (or the soul) occupies the serai (*i. e.* mansion of the body), he gives its proper rent (*i. e.* discharges the duties of humanity) and abandoning his desires, resigns himself to the will of his deity. He wanders about at ease, forms no attachments, seeks only his beloved (God), and bestows a portion (of bread or any other thing) upon all who need it. He points out the path to heaven, rescues others from perdition, conforms to the duties of this world with his faith, and is influenced by no private motive. RA'MCHARAN says, that few individuals have followed the example of such a faqír, who gives no thought to the world, but is content with his present condition.

2nd Song in the Panjábí language.

The faqír whose heart is firm (in God) is above all amírs†; for he is a true pírf‡. Knowing that the body is a hell, he places not his affections on the world, and keeps aloof from it by frequently meditating on the Alif of Allah. Restraining his heart from going astray, he has laid it at the feet of the Almighty, and remembers him at dawn, in the morning, at noon-time, and evening. He absolves himself in the water of faith, and tells the beads of fatwa§. His cave is in the sky (*i. e.* abstraction of mind), where he sits in contemplation. RA'MCHARAN says, that people do not understand the secret motive of such a faqír, which is to obtain the indescribable Being|| in his body, whom he always serves.

4.—The darvèsh is always happy who is free from desire. Either remain at one place, or roam about in the four quarters (of the earth): roam about in the four quarters, and labour for the salvation of your soul. Be awake or asleep, but entertain no selfish motive. Let your hair grow as long as was that of *Sahaka* and others, or shave your head bare: for he who is free from desire is always happy. Practise benevolence, and make your heart as pure and soft as wax, and look down upon your feet. Be patient, speak the truth, and dance without a mistake (*i. e.* discharge your duties properly). Having once placed the hand of your spiritual guide upon your head, never be so shameless as to undress yourself (*i. e.* refrain from all intercourse with women). He has subdued his mind and heart, and taken his seat in perseverance. RA'MCHARAN says, this is the height of devotion, as a person who attains it has cooled (subdued) his Pir (senses), and never covets the society of women. He is not given to intoxication, love, or adultery, but is always engaged in contemplation, and from leading a solitary life, his mind is free from all affection.

* An eighth part of the twenty-four hours.

† A chief or grandee.

‡ A saint, or spiritual father.

§ Divine knowledge.

|| The human soul is believed to be a portion of the Supreme spirit, and consequently worshipped as such.

5.—If having fed yourself through the charity of mankind you sleep at ease, with outstretched limbs, and fail to offer worship to HARÍ, the punishments of Yama* will not be mitigated: do not take thy meals without adoring the lord supporter RA'MA, but abandoning thy habits of idleness, worship him day and night. Abandon thy habits of idleness, and walk not without the fear of God. If you neglect to follow (this advice), you are a hypocrite, and shall be doomed to pass through the eighty-four (transmigrations). As a powerful creditor collects his dues from his weak debtors by severe beating, so shall you be punished if you take your food without adoring RA'MA.

6.—The ignorant person who commits a sin becomes free from it by the acquisition of knowledge, but the man of knowledge, who is guilty of vice, is like a newly varnished pot, from which the dust (should any fall upon it) never goes off. He is like a newly varnished pot from which the dust never goes off, or like a blue stain (upon linen). A sin committed at a holy place of pilgrimage is like a waking dream. As the stupid man who mistakes his way in the day-time can never discover the true path at night, so the person who possessed of knowledge perpetrates a sin can never emancipate himself from it.

7.—He is a real faqír who makes the stone his bed, whose tent is the sky, whose arms are his pillows, and who eats his food from earthen vessels: he is the master of the four quarters, and is not regarded as low. The prince and the peasant fall prostrate at his feet, and he subsists by begging.

8.—You must die one day, whether you live in the city or the wilderness†. Some (*i. e.* the wicked) are taken bound in chains, while others (*i. e.* the good) are summoned (by death). They are sent for who have renounced the world, who have none to weep (for them), and who have always taken the name 'RA'MA.' RA'MCHARAN says, the good abandon their homes, because they know that they must one day perish, whether they inhabit the city or the wilds.

We should mourn over the corpses of the dead, if weeping could restore them to life. If doctors could save mankind, then none of the wealthy would die, but it is not in the power of any to escape death. Enquire of this from place to place, and weigh it thoroughly in your mind. Life and death were created by the Lord, who can do whatsoever he willeth. We should mourn over the corpses of the dead, if they could be restored to life by weeping. You blame RA'MA, and cry:—“ Oh RA'MA, what have you done, who will support my family, and who will superintend my household works? What have you done, Oh RA'MA? you have as it were sunk the vessel in the middle of the stream.” You know not how long you may live, and RA'MCHARAN declares without this knowledge you fall off from HARÍ, because you blame RA'MA, and exclaim, ‘ Oh RA'MA, what have you done?’

‡9.—You may have followers, eloquence, and fame, without using any exertion to obtain them; you cannot therefore fathom the will of RA'MA. I look not for means; every thing comes to pass of its own accord. The will of HARÍ is powerful, who can revert it? Whatever happens is accomplished by RA'MA; for I am incapable of performing any thing, it is the very height of folly.

* The Indian Pluto, and king of Patal or hell.

† Meaning the souls of those persons.

‡ The figures correspond with the number of paragraphs in the MS. selections.

2nd Leaf.

1.—Man clad in scented garments walks forth with conceited strides, but while all in his outward appearance is fair, his inside is corrupt. He views his features in the glass, and is puffed up with pride; but is ignorant, that his body will suffer dissolution at last, and that not even the fair skin (which now) covers the filthiness within him, will remain.

2.—Woman and the objects (met with in this world) persuade the heart to terrestrial enjoyments, and often level the most exalted mind; such is their nature, therefore abandon them, Oh RA'MCHARAN! You can obtain nothing, Oh RA'MCHARAN, in this world without money, but to an ascetic money is nothing. To an ascetic money is as worthless as a kowri shell; it destroys devotion, knowledge, and ascetism; it ruins devotion, knowledge, and ascetism; for it increases the appetites and eats up (*i. e.* destroys) the integrity of those three qualities. Like achavan*, it absorbs every virtue; wherefore an ascetic sets no value upon money.

3.—The body is the shrine of which the all-perfect RA'MA is the god; the anxiety (to see him) is the artíf, and to remember him is true devotion. No worship is better than the constant remembrance of him, and no offering is more proper than resignation. Leave your heart's individuality (or pride), and God will listen to your adoration. He is quite content, Oh RA'MCHARAN, who has understood this secret truth, that the body is the shrine of which the all-perfect RA'MA is the god. Destroying your works (*i. e.* abandoning the merit of them hereafter), enjoy the sweets of humility, contentment, charity, and peace. Speak the truth, curb your inclination and your tongue, repeat the name (RA'MA) inwardly, and acquire divine knowledge. Give up your desires, sit down contented, retire to the woods, and immerse yourself in the pleasant ocean (of contemplation). The faqír who has drunk of the love (of God) constantly meditates on him, his aspirations and respirations are not in vain; for whether awake or asleep, he never forgets his God. He is merciful, subdues his anger, and neither indulges in avarice or delusion: he worships none but RA'MA, and cares not if the remaining three hundred and thirty millions of gods are displeased with him.

4.—The ascetic is always awake, and meditates himself, and makes others meditate (on God). Whenever slumber comes upon him, he sings a hymn—whenever he lights a lamp, he thinks of the safety of animals, and covers it either with abhra or cloth; by this means, the followers (of this doctrine) never incur guilt, but attain virtue. CHÍTAN says, that many have obtained salvation by avoiding desire, and disclaiming all merit in their works.

5.—What will you achieve in lying, oh KABÍR?—lying will bring on sleep while death is near the pillow, like the bridegroom at the turan. What will you achieve in sleeping, oh KABÍR?—awake and meditate upon Marání‡, for you must sleep one day with your long legs outstretched. What will you accomplish in sleeping, oh KABÍR; strive to keep yourself awake, for this life is as valuable as a diamond or ruby, and should be given up to (meditation on) the Lord. What

* The ceremony of sipping water before eating.

† The ceremony of turning a light about the face of an idol.

‡ A name of Krishna.

will you accomplish in lying, oh KABÍR? Arise and sorrow for nothing—how can he whose abode is in the grave (*i. e.* who reflects on the evanescence of this life)—(how can he) sleep in quiet?

6.—By adoring RA'MA, the state of Brahm is attained; this has been fully proved by his votaries. Let, therefore, all the Rámsanèhís meet together, and raise a hallelujah to RA'MA.

7.—Should the devotee go forth in the autumn, and trampling upon the numerous animals which are born at that season, occasion their death, he forfeits his innocence, inasmuch as he destroys the feelings of his heart, and thereby commits sin at every instant. TULSI says, this is not devotion either in mind, deed, or speech, but the devotee who is careful to remain quietly at home observes the rules of virtue.

(These verses are dated Tuesday, the 6th day of *Chait*, in the *Samvat* year 1855 (A. D. 1798), the year of RÁMCHARAN'S decease.)

II.—*Journal of a Tour through the Island of Rambree, with a Geological Sketch of the Country, and Brief Account of the Customs, &c. of its Inhabitants.* By Lieut. WM. FOLEY. With a map, Plate iv.

(Continued from page 39.)

January 15th.—It had been my intention to cross over *Jeeka*, and proceed from thence towards the town of *Rambree*, through the *Northern Hong**. My host of *Oogah*, and the guides he had furnished me with, were, however, so fearful of accident, and unwilling that I should incur any risk by passing over this wild and almost inaccessible part of the island, that I abandoned the design, and consented to be taken along the sea-shore to the south-west of the mountain, with the view of putting up at *Singhunnéthe*, a village in the *Southern Hong*. I afterwards discovered that had the day been any other than what it was; (Wednesday,) I might have succeeded in inducing the guides to take me over Mount *Jeeka*. The *Mugh*s pay a superstitious deference to what are termed the fortunate and unlucky days for any undertaking. Wednesday (*Boduh-hoo*), happened to be among the latter number. *Pyatho* (January), is held to be a very unfavourable season for building a house, and marriages are never celebrated in the months† *Wajho*, *Wagoung*, *Todelin* and *Tsadinkyot*. I left *Oogah* by the sea-beach, and passing a few sandstone rocks, with an island resembling the *knot* in appearance and structure, found myself at the foot of *Jeeka*. Its elevation above the sea is probably as much as 3000 feet; the very abrupt manner in which it rises above the range with which it is connected, gives it, at a dis-

* *Hong* is one of the circles in the island; there are two *Hongs*, (*North* and *South*.)

† July, August, September and October.